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Charles R. Fullwood, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Melba McGee, Planning and Assessment
Dept. of Environment, Health, & Natural Resources

FROM: Dennis Stewart, Manager
Habitat Conservation Program

Date: August 21, 1992

SUBJECT: Request for comments pertaining to formal scoping meeting on US 70 Havelock Bypass, Craven County, North Carolina, TIP No. R-1015, SCH Project No. 93-0056.

The N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) has completed a review of the proposed project and possible impacts on existing wildlife and fishery resources on the area. A formal scoping meeting was attended by a NCWRC staff biologist on July 29, 1992. Our comments are provided in accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332 (2)(C)), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

This project involves a proposed bypass of Havelock, N. C., by US 70, involving approximately 9 miles of highway construction on new alignment. Portions of the study area lie within the Croatan National Forest. The N. C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has proposed the highway as a limited access facility to alleviate present and future traffic congestion in the area.

The NCWRC recommends that use of existing alignment be maximized on this project. In addition to wetland impacts, any new alignment located west of Havelock will eliminate, degrade, and fragment high quality upland wildlife habitat in and near National Forest lands. These lands provide habitat for several species of threatened and endangered plants and animals and are regionally significant as some of the largest surviving areas of undeveloped land, vital to populations of area-sensitive vertebrate species, including black bear and red-cockaded woodpecker. Highway construction within Forest boundaries would isolate large tracts of otherwise suitable habitat, present a barrier to wildlife travel, and increase the risk of